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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. RIBBLE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 7, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable REID J. RIBBLE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

WHAT WOULD REAGAN DO ABOUT ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, what would President Ronald Reagan do about illegal immigration?

Mr. Speaker, let me share verbatim with you parts of a 2006 editorial by Ronald Reagan's Attorney General, Edwin Meese, that is instructive:

What would Ronald Reagan do? I can't tell you how many times I have been asked that question, on virtually every issue imaginable.

Immigration is one area where Reagan's principles can guide us, and the lessons are instructive.

President Reagan set out to correct the loss of control at our borders. Border security and enforcement of immigration laws would be greatly strengthened, in particular through sanctions against employers who hired illegal immigrants. If jobs were the attraction for illegal immigrants, then cutting off that option was crucial.

He also agreed with the legislation in adjusting the status of immigrants, even if they had entered illegally, who were law-abiding long-term residents, many of whom had children in the United States.

Illegal immigrants who could establish that they had resided in America continuously for 5 years would be granted temporary resident status, which could be upgraded to permanent residency after another 18 months and, after another 5 years, to citizenship. It wasn't automatic. They had to pay application fees, learn to speak English, understand American civics, pass a medical exam and register for military Selective Service. Those with convictions for a felony or three misdemeanors were ineligible.

The lesson from the 1986 experience is that such an amnesty did not solve the problem. There was extensive document fraud, and the number of people applying for amnesty far exceeded projections. And there was a failure of political will to enforce new laws against employers. After a brief slowdown, illegal immigration returned to high levels and continued unabated, forming the nucleus of today's large population of illegal aliens.

So here we are, having much the same debate and being offered much the same deal.

What would President Reagan do? For one thing, he would not repeat the mistakes of the past, including those of his own administration. He knew that secure borders are vital and would now insist on meeting that priority first. He would seek to strengthen the enforcement of existing immigration laws. He would employ new tools like biometric technology for identification and cameras, sensors and satellites to monitor the border that make enforcement and verification less onerous and more effective.

One idea President Reagan had at the time that we might also try improving on is to create a pilot program that would allow genuinely temporary workers to come to the United States, a reasonable program consistent with security and open to the needs and dynamics of our market economy.

And what about those already here? Today it seems to me that the fair policy, one that will not encourage further illegal immigration, is to give those here illegally the opportunity to correct their status by returning to their country of origin and getting in line with everyone else. This, along with serious enforcement and control of the illegal inflow at the border, a combination of incentives and disincentives, will significantly reduce over time our population of illegal immigrants.

Lastly, we should remember Reagan's commitment to the idea that America must remain open and welcoming to those yearning for freedom. As a Nation based on ideas, Ronald Reagan believed that there was something unique about America and that anyone, from anywhere, could become an American. That means that while we seek to meet the challenge of illegal immigration, we must keep open the door of opportunity by preserving and enhancing our heritage of legal immigration, assuring that those who choose to come here permanently become Americans. In the end, it was his principled policy—and it should be ours—to “humanely regain control of our borders and thereby preserve the value of one of the most sacred possessions of our people: American citizenship.”

According to Reagan Attorney General Ed Meese, President Ronald Reagan would learn from history and not repeat the 1986 amnesty mistake that created today's illegal alien problem, the very same amnesty that today's President and so many Senators and Congressmen demand.

President Reagan would insist that those who are here illegally must repent and atone for their illegal conduct by returning to their country of origin and getting in line with everyone else.

Mr. Speaker, America's most cherished right is American citizenship. Foreigners whose first action on American soil is illegal conduct are not deserving of that cherished right.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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